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Lawmaker Urges Federal NanoTech Advisory Panel

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Legislation to create a federal nanotechnology advisory board and a nanotechnology research program was introduced in Congress Wednesday by Silicon Valley Rep. Mike Honda (D.-Calif.). The panel would advise the president and Congress on research investment strategy, policy, objectives, and oversight related to the federal government's [National Nanotechnology Initiative](#) (NNI).

Nanotechnology refers to the ability of scientists and engineers to manipulate matter at the level of single atoms, and small groups of atoms. With new tools, structural properties of matter 1/100,000 the width of hair are being manipulated by researchers, and the technology holds the promise of changing the way many things are designed and made in information technology, medicine, energy, biotechnology, electronics and other fields.

For the technology sector, nanotechnology processes will allow semiconductor innovation to advance Moore's Law beyond the limitations imposed by today's design, development, and fabrication tools.

In 1996, a federal interagency working group was formed to set up and define a national nanotechnology strategy. This developed into the NNI, which is a collaborative initiative of 13 federal agencies. According to the National Science Foundation, the market for nanotechnology products and services in the United States alone could reach over \$1 trillion by 2015.

Honda's bill creates an advisory board from industry and academia to help articulate short-term (1-5 years), medium-range (6-10 years), and long-range (10+ years) goals and objectives and to establish performance metrics for the NNI. The board would submit an annual report to the president and Congress regarding nanotechnology progress, and a review on funding levels for nanotechnology activities for each federal agency.

The bill also calls for the president to establish a national nanotechnology research program to undertake long-term basic nanoscience and engineering research that focuses on fundamental understanding and synthesis of nanometer-size building blocks. Particular emphasis would be placed on potential breakthroughs in areas such as materials and manufacturing, nanoelectronics, medicine and healthcare, computation and information technology, and national security.

Honda introduced similar legislation in the waning days of the 107th Congress. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Science which, in turn, referred it to the Subcommittee on Research. No hearings were held and the bill died. Honda said he is optimistic that the provisions in his re-introduced bill will advance in the 108th session of Congress.

"Over the past few months, my legislative proposal has been gaining support throughout industry and academia," Honda said. "My legislation, and other nanotechnology proposals must be addressed in a bi-partisan matter."

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